Padraic Colum has been elected Editor of The Measure for June, July and August

THE MEASURE
A JOURNAL OF POETRY

Third Movement from "The Pilgrimage of Festus"
—*He Enters the Forest of Departed Gods* — —
— — — — — — — — — Conrad Aiken

Poetry and Publicity — — by Padraic Colum

Conrad Aiken and the Minor Mode — — — —
— — — — — — — by Maxwell Anderson

$2.00 by the Year — Single copies 25c — Number 3, May 1921
Published Monthly at 4 Christopher Street, New York, N. Y.

Contents

POEMS Page

Beggars. By Emmy Veronica Sanders..... 3

Desert Shadow Songs. By Glenn Ward Dresbach..... 4

The Dreamer. Ad Infinitum. By Walter de la Mare..... 5

The Old Toy Booth. By Padraic Colum..... 6

Revelation. By Winifred Welles..... 7

Third Movement from "The Pilgrimage of Festus." *He Enters the Forest of Departed Gods.* By Conrad Aiken..... 8

The Stranger's Song. By George Brandon Saul..... 17

The Old Man. By Beatrice Ravenel..... 18

Escapes. By Kenneth Slade Alling..... 18

Poet on a Flat Car. By Keene Wallis..... 19

The Duke. By William Douglas..... 20

After a Fools' Banquet. By Pitts Sanborn..... 20

Jeanne de Bordeaux. By Pitts Sanborn..... 21

Two Sonnets from Oceano Noctes in Itinere Eterno. By Pitts Sanborn 22

EDITORIAL

Poetry and Publicity. By Padraic Colum..... 23

Conrad Aiken and the Minor Mode. By Maxwell Anderson..... 25

The Measure

A Journal of Poetry

Number 3 May, 1921

Beggars

I WANDER in the white dust of the roads—
I wander in the great vermilion cities—
See the twilight flower drop its petals
Softly on the great vermilion cities.

On the white roads, in the glaring cities
I have searched for shelter in the faces
From which pity falls like dew on road dust
And like twilight on vermilion cities.

And the faces passing in the twilight
Search my own for pity and for shelter
From the blinding dust of the white roads,
From the glare of the vermilion cities . . .

Ora pro Nobis!

Emmy Veronica Sanders

Copyright, 1921, by the Editors

Second class entry applied for at the New York postoffice.

Desert Shadow Songs

I.

THE shadow of a cloud moves on the grass
Parched with the fever of the thirsting day—
A filmy coolness drifted from afar
And drifted soon away!
Promise of rain that fails, how soon to pass
Where deeper shadows are!
So on my brow what shadow-hands have passed
And left an olden fever to the last. . . . .

O land of hot winds and dwarfed wistful tree
And all veiled mysteries of amethyst and blue,
My shadow falls on you,
Your shadows fall on me!

II.

I would not have my love be here
In shadowed silence lest she see
My shadow more than me, and fear
Within my arms again to be—
For fear her son and mine at birth
Would keep such shadows in his eyes,
Too much a part of long gray earth,
O God, too hurt, too quickly wise!

Glenn Ward Dresbach

The Dreamer

THE woods were still; no breath of air
Stirred in leaf or brake;
Cold hung the rose, unearthly fair;
The nightingale, awake,
In rusted coverts of the may,
Shook out her bosom's down;
Alone, upon her starry way,
The moon, to fulness grown,
Moved, shining, through her misty meads;
And, roofless from the dew,
Knelt way-worn Love, with idle beads,
And dreamed, thou dear, of you.

Ad Infinitum

OH yes, my dear, you have a Mother
And she when young, was loved by another;
And in that mother's nursery,
Played *her* mamma, like you and me;
When that mamma was tiny as you
She had a happy mother too.

O, into distance, smalling, dimming,
Think of that endless row of women,
On, on: yes, presto! Puff! Pee-fee!—
And grandam Eve and the apple-tree.
Like beads, like posts, like lamps, they seem—
Grey-green willows, and life a stream—
Laughing and sighing and lovely, and Oh,
You to be next in that long row.

Walter de la Mare

The Old Toy-Booth

MEET for a town where pennies have few pairs
In children's pockets, this toy-booth with its wares:
Jews' harps, and masks, and kites,
And paper-lanterns with their farthen lights,
All in the dim-lit window, and within
Things memory-seen:
The walls that have the patches of the damp,
The counter where there burns the murky lamp;
And then, the counter and the shelf between:
The dame—
Meagre, grey-polled, lame.

Well, Miler Dowdall, the great pugilist,
Who had the world once beneath his fist,
Would come in here to buy his pockets' full:
We used to see him with deft hands held up
To win the champion's belt or silver cup,
Upon the hoardings on our way to school:
Now Miler's is a name that's blown by.

So she is here since times legendary,
A bird of little worth—a sparrow, say,
Whose crib's in some neglected passageway,
And one's left wondering who brings crumbs to her:
Soft-voiced and friendly-spoken, she will hop
The inches of her crib, this narrow shop,
When you step in to be her customer.

How's custom? Bad enough! She had not sold
Six kites this windy year she'd have it told:
She sold kites by the gross in days a-gone;
Marbles, none at all:
The children had no money to make call.

Wasn't it poor, the town
Where boys

Could not buy marbles, leaving other toys;
Where little girls could hardly pay for dolls?

But she's not tragical—no, not a bit;
She laughs as she talks to me—that is it:
Her eyes are like the farthen candles' light
In paper lanterns when they burn bright;
Her voice is like the twittering notes upon
The mouth-held Jews' harp when the plectrum's strung;
And she herself is like a kite upborne,
A paper-kite held by a string that's worn!

How strange to think that she is still inside,
After so many turns of the tide!
Since this lit window was a dragon's eye
To turn us all to wonder coming nigh:
Since this dim window was a dragon's eye!

Padraic Colum

Revelation

I WAS a tall and delicate dancer,
All awing with flying joy—
I stood as proud in my scarlet sandals
As ever a Grecian boy—

Till I came to a wood like evening,
A solemn and sunless place,
Where water as true as a knife blade
Was sharp with my own real face.

That is why I am rooted
So scared here and still,
Hiding beneath these petals,
Huddled under this hill.

Winifred Welles

Third Movement from "The Pilgrimage of Festus"

HE ENTERS THE FOREST OF DEPARTED GODS

I.

'IN this forest,' says Festus, 'this old and savage forest,
Among these trees
Which have performed, one knows, such cruelties,—
Where cruelties are even now performed—;
In the silence of this forest, which conceals
Temples and tombs; among these gleams and glooms;
Where, amid the windy shiftings of these trees,
One sees in the dark for a moment a temple glisten;
Where, if one will listen
To the wind's long leafy swell
One hears the rustled stirring of a bell:
A small bell faintly clinked,
Sleepy and indistinct:
Or a deep bell which the winds forlornly toll;
Is it as some say true—Old man of the rain!—
That here the gods still dwell,—
That here in the shadowy noons they walk again,
That here the body may meet an unbodied soul? . . .'

(. . . The trees are still, the trees make hardly a sound,
The trees let fall old leaves in silence,
The old leaves touch, with a sigh, the ground.)

'In this forest,' says Festus, 'this forest of eternal life and death,
This forest in which the pools are fertile,
This forest of blind old roots and furtive breath—
Is it as some say true
That if I touch with my hands an oak or yew,
Or break a willow bough,
Among these leaves Confucius will come forward
In a robe of saffron silk, and stand
With one uplifted hand,
And say to me, "Be tranquil, stare at death,

Live as the grass lives, uncomplaining,
Be grateful for the sun" . . . Or among these trees
Shall I indeed hear the clear voice of the Buddha,
And see him, smiling, sit with folded knees
On the great lotos: and hear him say
"Look through the little whirlings of night and day,
The dark brief flight of clouds and rain,
The red transparencies of pleasure and pain,—
To the white perfection of the infinite . . ."
Or find that other, Jesus of Nazareth,
Under a pear-tree, eating of the fruit,
And hear him say, "Heed not the absolute,
Love what is little, turn not your thoughts above
So much as here and round you,—mostly, love!" . . . ?'

(. . . The many trees, on the unseen waves of the air,
Rise slowly, turn, or slowly come to pause.
The leaves are laced together and parted again,
The small bell tinkles, the deep bell tolls,
A flurry of rain on the leaves makes a sound of applause . . .)

'And what shall I say—to Jesus of Nazareth?
Or, to Confucius, what shall I reply,—
Or what to Buddha? . . . Shall I indeed say, "It is I,
I, who carry the world like a bird in a cage,
I, for whom the world sings morning and evening?"
Shall I say: "how then shall I think you god or sage
You who would have me live as the grass; or love it;
Or you who would have me lift clear eyes above it
To the silent ecstasy of life in death?" '

(. . . The trees of the forest are calm and stolid about him:
It is as if they eyed this man askance.
They stir a little, suspicious, not knowing his purpose;
And the irresponsible and capricious leaves
Catch at the ghost of an air and flash and dance.)

II.

In the midst of a pool of sunlight, in the silence of the forest,
Festus sits on a stone:

The silence breaks in slow green waves about him.
He is alone.

'Look now Confucius! . . . Jesus of Nazareth! . . .
Buddha, whose heart is an eternally opening flower—!
Look at the world of men I have left behind me
To seek you amid the mysteries of this forest . . .
What will you give me in place of this—what power,
What majesty, what secret dark dominion,
What lucid understanding of life and death?
What knowledges—Confucius, Jesus, Buddha—
What knowledges of grain and star have you?
Can you at will wear divers shapes and bodies:
Do I in error imagine you as trees
Opening rosy blossoms, or letting fall
Your glossy petals on a wall;
Can you at will let fall your hearts as dew,
Among these leaves for the delight of a bee or a bird;
Can you, indeed, be silence only; or in the twilight,
When the forest closes on its memories,
Let yourselves be heard
As whisper only, or rustle, or creak, or sigh,
The shrinking of a leaf that is old and dry,
The snap of a dark root, underground,—
Can you, indeed, embody your souls as sound? . . .'

A parrot swings in the bough of a mulberry tree,
Regarding Festus listlessly.
A mulberry leaf detaches itself and falls,
Silently pirouetting through a pool of sunlight;
And the quiet above him builds itself green walls.

'This silence, now—this bird with crimson feathers—
Is it with these you speak to me?
Confucius, are you indeed this mulberry tree
Extending cold and green in a void of silence,
Bearing a crimson bird, or slowly and softly
Letting a single leaf fall, carefully?
Or if indeed these leaves were once your flesh;
Or if from among these leaves at a certain moment

In the eternal and golden recurrence of time
With a leafy rustle and chime
You step once more, having no other speech
Than sings from a choir of leaves in wind and rain,—
What, in the silence then, shall I hear you teach?
What syllables will fall as this leaf falls,
Which shall remove forever death and pain?'

The mulberry tree makes no reply;
Placid and solitary beneath the sky,
Seeming to dream no dream of leaf or bird,
It sways in the pool of sunlight; and beneath it
The words of Festus fall and are not heard.

III.

'Nevertheless,' says Festus, 'I await you:
In this silence I will wait . . .
In the darkness, in the greenly filtered starlight,
I will seek among white-blossomed boughs a gate,
I will find your old and secret ruin of temple,
With its bell that makes no sound:
I will touch it with cool hands, and tear away
The jasmine flowers that wrap it round.
Will it not ring? . . . Will it not cry aloud
From the immortal hearts of three great gods
To star and moon and the passing cloud? . . .
Will you not then come forward, like three children
Performing miracles? Will you not say
"This is he who gave his world away
For the knowledges that make a man immortal—
Let us light for him the portal
That will lead him out of time and space forever . . ."?
Will you not touch my eyes with hands like silver,
Spread a net of music round me,
Pierce me, break me, and confound me
In a dazzling light of sound, in a tumult as of light?
Shall I pass beyond the walls of day and night? . . .

'Yet it is strange you say no word, nor manifest
Your hiding-places.

No wind there is, yet the tree-tops do not rest.
From gloom to gloom I seek your faces,
Bringing my world to give you like a jewel . . .
Ah Jesus, Buddha, grey Confucius,
Is it as some say true
That I shall have no comfort out of you?
And is this forest but illusion
In which old ghosts of sound make soft confusion?'

IV.

The evening darkens: how insubstantial now
Whirls the black forest of departed gods!
Less than the glimmering blossom on this bough
Which the dead moon so wanly kindles;
Fallen with less sound than a cup of petals
On cobwebs rent with dew;
Less real than these,
So now, so now, this old illusion dwindles;
I am alone, then, in this forest:
I walk alone amid these trees.
Confucius has not strength to lift a pebble;
Buddha, who is but vapor, casts no shadow;
Jesus is silent, under a stone . . .
Revere the moon, Festus, who, though dead,
Reveals this emptiness! Revere the moon.

Cool is the evening, cooler in the mind,
Where the dew falls among more phantom forests,
On flowers ghostly and on hands unreal.
This is the forest where abide the gods;
This is the emptiness your moons reveal.
Be silent, Festus, here amid these trees
Which are yourself: be silent, dream among them,
Become a ghost yourself, in a world of ghosts;
Give yourself gods! Or if the gods obey not——

The gods obey not. And among these trees
I will discourse with Mephistopheles . . .
. . . Come with a clap of thunder! Shed bright fire
On oak and smoking maple! Split a rock

Or draw a molten cedar round about you!
Be horned with gold, wear diamonds on your brow,
Tailed like a serpent, star-tipped at the point:
Let every footstep be a tuft of smoke
In the anguished grass! . . . Or else, have none of these;
Be, as your master is, most sorrowful,
Count beads, say prayers, shed tears.

Look, where his ghost shines pale among these trees!
I will discourse with Mephistopheles. . . .

Be not so fugitive! Disclose your powers,
Show me what evil, in this world of evil,
Turns to a profit with a wave of the wand!
Tear open, with your silver-taloned hand,
The hearts of women; feed me on slow laughter,
Pluck richest music from poor strings of flesh!
Show yourself nimble—come and go like an actor
In garbs fantastic, wear a woman's body,
To dance before me naked and cold in sunlight:
Bring moonlight, teach me to love in such a fashion
I shall not surfeit of you, nor, being refused,
Beat out my love in sorrow! . . . But can this be
That Mephistopheles whom I have honored?
Singular, he should look so like to me!

(. . . It is a woman's body shines before me:
It is a flake of the moon:
It is the intensity of my desire! . . .)

How lightly the wind blows you through this darkness!
How smoothly wrought, how curious is your body!
How colder than a sea-shell is your flesh!
And look: there are silver cobwebs woven about you,
Webs to be brushed away, to be breathed upon and broken,
Fine webs about your breast, cool webs about your heart!
You are among these trees which are myself;
You move beneath my thousand branches;
Pass slowly, meditate, retrace your steps,

Yet not too slowly pass,
Nor yet with too few footsteps touch this grass! . . .
I am about you as the darkness is:
Softly within me, ghost of light,
Turn and turn, amaze me with your beauty;
Be in me as the firefly in the night!

(. . . It is a woman's body shines before me:
Not an illusion, not Mephistopheles,
Not the intensity of my desire!
It is not the light of my heart among these trees,—
The light I cast before me and foolishly follow:
It is a woman's body . . . but what, if none of these,
It is not flesh, or beauty in flesh, or the desire for gods,
But the god himself, an ancient satyr,
Burning his heart in a tissue of sorceries? . . .)

Who was it gave you eyes so unlike mine?
Who was it took the huge sky filled with stars,
Twilight of time, twilight of infinity
Delicately conscious of the finite beauty of stars,
And gave it to you for darkness in your eyes?
See how the mandolin tinkle of my praise
Wavers and is extinguished, goes but so little, faintly,
Amid such midnight silence! Is it indeed
You, who move like a wandering lantern, going
In the conscious all-enfolding night of me—
Deeply within me glimmering, faintly revolving;
Or is it rather myself, who drop old praises
Into an emptiness and darkness so profound?
Touch me, talk to me, cleave to me, turn about me,
Show me in all ways the amazement of your beauty,
Gleam, burn, pale before me, laughingly afflict me,
Tear with your hands at the honey that's hid in my heart!
I will submit to you, if you wish submission,
Or tower above you like terror, if terror you wish;
Be as the grass before you, or the forest above you . . .
We are together and the great world is our shadow!
Who brought us here? Who found your heart in fire? . . .

(Clouds flow up to the zenith, glide under the stars,
Seem curling coldly about them, are lit by the moon,—
Twice, thrice,—then shred on the air and die.
These are the centuries: I am old as granite,
I have been standing beneath these stars forever,
Forest grown upon forest, hill huddled on hill.
Star-dust has darkened my heart . . . Snow-song . . . bird song . . .
How many aeons returning have whispered and thrilled me!
Rocks, how many, have crashed into dust beneath me!
Lovers, how many, have loved me and blown on the wind!)

You are the full cold cloud-dividing beauty
Of the August moon:
The moon in the warm blue violet depths
Between snow-cliffs of cloud:
The death-wind that shakes down a shower of stars
From the green tree of heaven.
I am the clouds that endeavor to close about you;
The stars that cling to the tree of heaven,
And, falling through you, are blest . . .
What is your name? Why have I sought you
As Jesus, Confucius, Buddha?
Or why,—among the memories of these trees,—
Did I perceive you as Mephistopheles? . . .
How simple and terrible are the words you use!
Your 'yes' what is it but 'forever',—
The white tide of suns roaring down space on space
Through the everlasting blue canyon of time?
Your 'no' what is it but 'death',
The sky of black basalt that crushes one soul?
Your 'beauty'—what tempests of music assail me!
What silence—stars in the spring! . . .
I walk by a violet river paved with stars,
The music of earth about me moving softly
From stone to dust, from dust to tree.
I stand on a purple mountain at the daybreak
And watch a cloud procession, far below me,
Leisurely crossing a twilight sea.
Forests ascend about me and are fallen,
Stars are quenched in the rains of time;

Slowly the gods in azure mantles of dream,
Leave behind them the hills that immortally gleam,
Descend with sorrowful footsteps. Slowly climb
The younger gods with sadness in their eyes
To hills less noble and to darker skies . . .
I walk by a purple river brimmed with stars,
Sad with the sadness of incomprehensible beauty,
Hearing in turn the voices of all things, lifting
Their patient questions. . . . Valleys, how lovely are they
One slope green with meadows, sun-enkindled,
One slope black with shadow, stark with boulders,
Tawny with sands, twinkling with streams! . . .
Sorrowful is my heart when I remember beauty,
It is with sorrow that I hear you dancing,—
Beautiful dancer on air and fire!—
In the old grey house of my heart:
I am the dust on which a rose has fallen,
The stone on which vain starlight falls;
How sadly unworthy of you are these grey cloisters,
These cobwebbed walls! . . .

(It is not a woman's body shining before me—
Not a flake of the moon—
Not the intensity of my desire! . . .

The darkness seems to freeze
In the immobile shapes of trees. . . .

It is not Buddha, it is not Confucius,
Jesus, or Mephistopheles,
Not a dream, less than the dream of a dream . . .
It is myself alone,—
Touching with hands a world of ancient stone;
Summoning gods from it,—how fugitive and vain!—
Summoning gods to walk on the delicate shine of air,
Weaving out of the rock a gossamer
Vast as the world is, that therein might fall
A dew of stars! . . . Ah Festus, Festus, Festus,
How always about you, greater than the world you dream of,
Rises immortally beyond you your own self's wall!)

Conrad Aiken

The Stranger's Song

This is the song the stranger sang:

"A Lotus-flower swam out of the noon,
Out of the noonday's burning breast;
The blithe winds brought it the winds and birds
And kissed it away to the crimson west.

"Deep in the twilight the hills were sad,
And the birds and the winds and the waves were hushed,
And the clouds were lying across the land
Where a fallen Lotus lay bruised and crushed.

"And the night came down with a thousand bells
That swept like a snow from the withered stars,
And the strange wild music it broke my heart
And wove my spirit a mesh of wars.

"Millions of daughters the world has known
And fed with the milk of her golden breast,
But—there was a Lotus came out of the noon
And withered away beneath the west;—

"And there was a dusk and a night with bells,
And there was a woe on the heart of me!—
Millions of daughters the earth has known
But only one was a part of me!"

—This is the song that the stranger sang:
They called him a fool till the heavens rang.

George Brandon Saul

The Old Man

DO they ever grow really old,
Do they cease to believe in miracles?

He sits in the Park,
His buttonhole blooms unconcerned, a bud in the crack of a ruin;
His fine, gathered fingers curl upward:
He is holding hands with the sun.

Like a girl's shadow
The furtive smell of the Spring runs over his face.

"She would come like that,
A little abashed, a little defiant. . . ."
He fondles the past in his palms with the alchemical sun.
The past?
"She will come. . . ."
The future is coming!

Beatrice Ravenel

Escapes

THE winds and brooks have yielding shapes,
And hence their happy, blithe escapes
From all the forces that would bind them;
And would that God, who has designed them,
Had with more similarity
Made me.

Kenneth Slade Alling

Poet on a Flat Car

ALL I have and ever had is going.
It is gone, let it go.
Let it drift like moon and river flowing
With a tranquil churning flow.

Let it swim as all a world is swimming
Past the car where I lie,
All I meant go glimmering and dimming
Like the floating moon and sky.

Back in town I sweated for achievement,
I have failed, never mind.
I believe I suffered some bereavement,
That has slipped me now, I find.

I am done with feeling and ambition.
All I need is a train
Then to blunder into no condition
That would give me hope or pain.

I will live and answer not a question
That I put with a smile,
Hours of dream shall bring their dim suggestion
And to breathe seem worth the while:

I shall be with cottonwood and willow,
With a moon, with a stream,
Feel the jolts that jar my splintered pillow
Only gently through the dream:

I shall live with not a hopeful worry
But to smile when I die.
Death will come, but not in any hurry.
Does it hustle? why should I?

Keene Wallis

The Duke

"BUILD me a tower on this far-seeing hill," said the duke,
"None of these milky classical stumps with their frill and pretense,
But an upstanding keep, a constant rebuke to offence,
Whence I'll see all those wealthy old rats as they twist through the plains:
How they'll sweat for my gains!"

It stands like a sword in the amethyst sky, grey and blue;
"T'was a wonderful faith which aspired to the truest and highest in creed!
Surely this meant a prayer! Ah, those people knew!" So concede
All the tourists that pant to its eminence each passing year.
But the duke cannot hear.

William Douglas

After a Fools' Banquet

TURN to the earth, my son, the earth will care,
Her harvests peep and wax for all and you,
Impenitent is she, and she is true,
Eat of her fulness, doubt not, it is there.

Espouse the earth, mother and bride, and dare
To strangle every dream; her breast anew
Shall comfort yield, and deathlessly the dew
Of mortal urge in death shall leave you fair.

So flee you Love, the wanton and not blind;
Sweet and relentless is Love's even gait,
No wife of Lot, she never looked behind,
For her elect no call has she to wait.
White though her feet upon the flowering land,
Always the dagger naked in her hand.

Pitts Sanborn

Jeanne de Bordeaux

From Bearn

MAD are the trees in the youth of the year,
The thrashing poplars row on row?
Are spring tides lashing the river clear,
Jeanne de Bordeaux, Jeanne de Bordeaux?

In summer dusk, demure and coy,
Do dark-eyed damsels, stepping slow,
Along the quay spy out their joy,
Jeanne de Bordeaux, Jeanne de Bordeaux?

And do the embers in their eyes
Across the painted fringes glow,
Denying painted modesties,
Jeanne de Bordeaux, Jeanne de Bordeaux?

When autumn locks the treasury
Of all the flowers and fruits that grow,
Is there a wight to wonder why,
Jeanne de Bordeaux, Jeanne de Bordeaux?

When winter with her shroud of mud
Brings misery to us below,
Oh, must a heart pass on the flood,
Jeanne de Bordeaux, Jeanne de Bordeaux?

Pitts Sanborn

Two Sonnets

FROM

OCEANO NOCTES IN ITINERE ETERNO

II

LISTEN, the chronic sorrow of the sea,
Ancient and aimless in the ways of men,
Wailing in alien syllables a pain
Bereft of reason, grieving emptily.
Listen, the wind's long road of mockery—
Yea, whence come we, where now, and whither then,
Blown wandering like wisps of winnowed grain,
A plaything for the sea's gaunt jubilee?

These are the measure, these the recompense,
Muffle your heart, the hooded night is dull
To you and dully keeps your confidence,
Always the ship cleaves onward dutiful
League after barren league, the only sense
That wave and wind make with an iron hull.

V

MAN and his woman, woman and her man—
Like the fond squirrel scampering in his cage
The mind trod in this mill of language sage
And held one station through the night it ran.
There are the bars, inexorable ban
For one and all, however hot we rage—
The stark cave couple in their primal age,
The gallant and his belle of painted fan.

End to adventure and the high emprise;
Never to longing, the unanswerable—
A dim horizon for our sea-starved eyes
Still holds the story that no tongue will tell.
A little wildly, rebel to her clan,
Man asks his woman—woman answers man.

—Pitts Sanborn

The Measure ~ *A Journal of Poetry*

Editorial office at 449 West 22nd St., N. Y.
Published monthly by Frank Shay, Four Christopher St., N. Y.

Edited by Maxwell Anderson, Padraic Colum, Agnes Kendrick Gray, Carolyn Hall, Frank Ernest Hill, David Morton, Louise Townsend Nicholl, George O'Neil, Genevieve Taggard. From these nine an acting editor and an assistant are elected quarterly by the board.

PRESENT EDITORS, MAXWELL ANDERSON AND LOUISE TOWNSEND NICHOLL
ELECTED FOR THE SUMMER TERM, PADRAIC COLUM AND CAROLYN HALL

Poetry and Publicity

IT is easy to persuade one that in present day America the idea of fame has been supplanted by the idea of publicity. One does not say that such a poet, novelist, painter, sculptor, or architect is famous—one says that he has publicity.

In Europe as in the America of a former day such artists had fame. Now, what is the difference between that fame and this publicity? Fame is the recognition that comes to one; publicity is the recognition that is brought, delivered, shipped, or despatched to one. Keats thought of fame under a figure that seems quaint to us now—

Fame, like a wayward girl, will still be coy.

Wayward! Coy! Then let us discharge her and bring in Miss Publicity.

This indeed seems to be the policy recommended by one of the New York journalist-critics. "In the old days," this gentleman is reported to have said, "the writer worked in his garret. Now he has come down into the street, and he has got a drum." The gentleman said it approvingly, and his remark was not received with howls.

He meant that the artist of to-day had mastered the secret of efficient distribution. Formerly the artist manufactured things in an obscure workshop. Few buyers knew of his goods or of his location. But now he is being advised by the efficiency-expert. He has come into the bright lights. And he has bought a drum.

But the plain fact is that there is no analogy whatever between the

goods of commerce and the goods of culture. The goods of culture are for those who go to seek them, and who go to seek them with love. The goods of commerce are for those on whom they can be planted. It is proper, we suppose, for an artist to draw attention to the goods of culture that he has produced. But it is not proper for him to externalize himself in order to attract this attention. A drum, we have no doubt, makes for externalization.

The confusion between the goods of culture and the goods of commerce is widespread to-day. For instance, there is the recent announcement of a movement to bring poets together. A Poet's House is to be founded. That may or may not be a good thing to do in the interests of poetry. But the announcement goes on to speak of this becoming "a clearing house for poetry." In that very phrase we have all of the confusion between goods of culture and goods of commerce that is prevalent here and now. The maker of the phrase reveals the fact that he or she is obsessed with the idea of mass-production—and so we see that the confusion is in the minds of many people who think they are friendly to poetry.

There have been rumors, too, that certain poets have shown themselves willing to pay for the press-agenting of their books. But it is hard to believe that poets would wrong themselves by entering into any such business. They must know that if they have created a poem they have created something that has a life of its own—that is part of their own spiritual being. What can the methods of commerce do for such a life? Nothing whatever. Those who harbor it will harbor it for some love that they bear to it. Without that love the poem will die, and no amount of press-agenting will gain love for it.

The other day the writer of this note was speaking to an American poet who is well-known here and well-known in Europe. We spoke of the strenuous campaign that some poets were reported to be making on behalf of their books. "I don't know," said this poet, "but that my own method is the best after all—it is to write the poems." It is the poet's responsibility to bring into being something living. It is not his responsibility to make a campaign for this living thing, drawing from his own spiritual forces the ability to make the campaign. It is the poet's duty as a creator to hold himself from the externalities of the market-place.

Padraic Colum

*Conrad Aiken and the Minor Mode**

LOOKING back casually over the history of English literature one discovers a number of surviving poets for every innovater in form. The *Canterbury Tales* founded a robust and humorous tradition of narrative verse which has been maintained by *Tam o' Shanter, Don Juan,* and *Bells and Pomegranates.* The largo music of the *Faerie Queene* has worthy following in the *Ode to a Nightingale* and *The Eve of St. Agnes.* Marlowe opened the richest national vein with *Tamburlaine* and *Dr. Faustus;* Shakespeare and Milton might be counted among his stylistic disciples. Swinburne, taking a hint from Shelley, hit upon a nimbler and more diaphanous measure; so far there is nobody to name with him. Whitman broke away once more by repudiating the traditional accent-counting of the tongue. H. D., splitting sentences into glinting shards, again produced something distinctive. Conrad Aiken's contribution is a sustained use of the minor mode.

There are gaps in this outline, without doubt, but the last achievement listed appears to me as solid as the rest. Henry Cowell, latest and most scientific of musical theorists, points out that major harmonies are founded on the mathematical relation of overtones to a parent note and that minor chords derive similarly from the less obvious undertones. Aiken turned instinctively to the lower echoes of the more melancholy scale, and to my notion has it almost entirely to himself. From Chaucer, who clung to the key of C, and Shakespeare, who shifted from a brilliant A to a solemn A flat, down to Whitman's defiance of notation and the chromatic essays of the imagists, English poets have preferred to base their melodic structure on the more hopeful intervals. There have been minor passages, but no poems in a minor key. If this statement sounds extreme it is easily verified by turning to Poe, *La Belle Dame sans Merci, Dejection: an Ode, "When the Lamp Is Shattered," The City of Dreadful Night,* or A. E. Housman. Sad things you find here, grim admissions, frank despair—but rendered always, be it noted, in time-tried, four-square, vigorous, obviously concordant, even cheerful numbers.

Turn then to *The House of Dust* or the second part of *Punch* and catch the failing, fading, dying tone—the familiar pulse and the shadowy, unfamiliar accompaniment. Mr. Aiken's philosophy is as old as philosophy itself, the doctrine of immitigable change, but his instrument is his

* Punch: The Immortal Liar, by Conrad Aiken. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. The House of Dust, a Symphony, by Conrad Aiken. Boston: The Four Seas Company.

own, and it is tuned in degrees to which we are unaccustomed. He drifts in undertones three notes below his predecessors and sets us wondering, very naturally, why his stuff contains so much of the poison that prevented Mithridates from dying young.†

The current criticism of Mr. Aiken, to the effect that all his books are alike, that he repeats himself tiresomely, is partially explicable by the same theory. To ears unused to the minor progressions all minor music rings monotonously, all minor melodies sound like repetitions of the same tune. In fact Mr. Aiken's ideas and figures are uncommonly varied; but because they are muffled under a peculiar assonance, and because of the baffling insistence of his sunken bells, we are inclined to lump them in a single category and accuse him of dogging his own steps round a trodden circle.

When he writes, as in the first part of *Punch,* in somebody's else manner, when he deliberately holds to the major scale and forgets his original contribution, he is complimented, cheered on. At the same time the *Portrait of One Dead,* one of the most poignant lyrics ever written, is missed by the reviewers because the broadly objective English ear doesn't catch its delicate resolutions. Yet it must not be supposed that a marvel of the sort he has compassed goes entirely unmarked and unread. His fame, growing slowly, grows the more sturdily. His art might be better rounded, as he is as well aware as another; he might choose narrower and more comprehensible themes; a maturer music could be made by a master to whom major and minor answered with equal readiness. Perhaps Mr. Aiken's studied use of one end of the sound spectrum gives evidence that his method is most of him, or at any rate that it is of more importance in poetic evolution than the matter embedded in it. But to regard him as negligible is to reveal either prejudice or lack of discernment. So far as I can make out his is the most notable gift among poets writing English in this generation.

Maxwell Anderson

---

† Our hands are hot and raw with the stones we have laid,
We have built a tower of stone high into the sky.
We have built a city of towers.
Our hands are light, they are singing with emptiness.
Our souls are light. They have shaken a burden of hours. . . .
What did we build it for? Was it all a dream? . . .
Ghostly above us in lamplight the towers gleam. . .
And after a while they will fall to dust and rain;
Or else we will tear them down with impatient hands;
And hew rock out of the earth, and build them again.